

# Federal parties urged to put child care on the ballot in fall election <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

Publicly funded child care is the most cost-effective route to gender equality and economic prosperity, says Oxfam Canada in a report that urges federal parties to put the issue on the ballot in next fall's federal election.

"Despite considerable evidence pointing to the benefits of child care for women's economic equality, for economic growth and for children's development, many governments fail to recognize child care as a public good and adequately resource it," says the international development agency in a report being released Tuesday.

"Families are left struggling to cover expensive child care fees, millions of women are kept out of the workforce, and half of the world's children go without pre-primary education," adds the report, titled: "Who Cares? Why Canada needs a public child care system."

In Canada, where most parents scramble to find — and pay for — quality licensed care, the report calls on federal parties to commit to spending an additional \$8 billion annually within 10 years to expand services, improve the child-care workforce and lower parent fees by at least 4 percent.

Under the current plan, Ottawa is committed to spending a total of \$7.5 billion by 2028 or just under \$1 billion annually.

The report's call for more spending is based on a 2017 International Monetary Fund study that found a 40-per-cent reduction in child-care costs would bring 150,000 highly-educated stay-at-home mothers into the workforce and boost Canada's GDP by 2 percentage points, or \$8 billion a year.

"Evidence shows that public child care is fiscally affordable because increases in parental employment bring in more tax revenues and result in reduced public spending on social assistance and other benefits," the report notes.

The investment would also help boost wages and working conditions of chronically low-paid early childhood educators, and end poor job satisfaction and labour shortages in the sector, it adds.

Canada has among the highest child-care costs in the world with Toronto parents paying an average of \$18,000 a year for kids under age 4.

"Canada is in a child-care crisis," said Diana Sarosi, Oxfam's policy manager. "Investing in child care is not only the right thing to do to advance gender equality; it is one of the smartest investments the government can make to ensure Canada is more inclusive, equal and prosperous."

Martha Friendly, of the Toronto-based Childcare Resource and Research Unit, said politicians should heed Oxfam's international experience on what it takes to build national prosperity.

"Prosperous countries, in order to do well, have to think about women's economic security," she said in an interview. "You can't really have prosperity unless you support women in the workforce and women can't work without child care. It's a modern issue."

Federal action is especially needed when provincial governments, like Ontario, are cutting costs to licensed care in favour of child-care tax rebates, said Morna Ballantyne, of Child Care Now, a national coalition of advocates that partnered with Oxfam on the report.

**Read more** <sup>[2]</sup>

**Related link:**

**Region:** Canada <sup>[3]</sup>

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